

Testimony of

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Before the

Education Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

Minimum Teacher Salary Establishing a higher minimum teacher salary would help recruit new teachers as well as retain teachers that have recently joined the profession. Presently the district that I teach in hires at \$53,915 and only \$56,220 with a master's degree. Additionally, due to several years of step freezes on our salaries, any teacher that is within 0-3 years of experience earns that same amount. According to Forbes, the average starting salary for a person graduating with a Bachelor's Degree is \$59,600, and \$69,700 for a person with a Master's Degree. If we want to attract and retain the best and brightest to teach our children, the least we can do is offer them a livable salary. Additionally, we are competing with industries that offer much higher salaries which are more incentivizing and we need to keep up.

COVID Benefit Enhancement In regards to the COVID Benefit Enhancement, so many educators pushed through the challenges of teaching during COVID, and as other professions have been recognized for their hard work and dedication, we deserve to be compensated for remaining loyal to the profession during unprecedented times. Looking back on it now I am still not sure how we all made it through. Teachers are a vital part of students' lives. During the pandemic we were charged not only with the task of educating children, but providing structure during what was by far the most chaotic time in modern history. We were forced to essentially invite students into our homes via online teaching and blur the home/work life balance to the point where it seemed as if work never truly ended. We had to quickly become masters of technology with little to no training or support and were expected to teach the same rigorous standards. Then there were times we were expected to dually teach both the children in front

of us and those online at the same time! The mental strain these expectations put on educators has been seen nationwide as evidenced by the mass exodus from the profession. Anyone that taught during that time deserves to be compensated for going above and beyond the call of duty. Duty-Free Prep Time Teachers need a minimum of 30 minutes duty-free prep time daily for lesson planning, parent contact time, and time to collaborate with colleagues. In order to properly educate children, teachers need time to do so much more outside of classroom time. Many districts purchase new curriculums that take time for teachers to learn in order to teach with fidelity. Prep time allows teachers to collaborate with colleagues about these curriculums as well as reflect and adjust their own plans. Additionally, a key piece to a successful education system is the home-school connection. Prep time allows teachers time to contact families and update them both the successes and struggles students are having. 30 minutes is a very limited amount of time to be able to do all of these things, but it is a start in the right direction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

